FROM THE OTHER END

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included her works in the post graduate research curriculum. As Banira Giri is becoming enormously popular, her works are being translated into several languages of the world. Currently, she works as Associate Professor of Nepali at Tribhuvan University.

YUYUTSU R. D.'s new book of poems *Bhimphedi* will appear from the Nirala publications soon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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BOOKS BY BANIRA GIRI

POETRY :

Eauta Eauta

Jiudo Jang Bahadur (Each one a living Jung Bahadu

Jeevan Thayamaru (Life : no place)

Mero Avishkar (My discovery)

Banira Giri ka
Naya Kavita Horu (New Poems) (Forthcoming)

FICTION

Karagar (The Prisonhouse)

Nirbandh (Unbound)

Mero Yatra Horu (Travelogues) (Forthcoming)

for
Banira's Shankar

NIRALA SERIES

A Series of Contemporary Literature

David Ray : Elysium In The Halls Of Hell
Ramanand Rathi : Dying in Rajasthan
Yuyutsu R. D. : A Prayer In Daylight
Jayanta Mahapatra : Dispossessed Nests
Banira Giri : From The Other End
Bimal Nibha : Men Before Fire

INTRODUCTION

To be in love with you is to taste the juice of your labouring valley.

Stifling cries, pulling green creepers entwined round the hefty thighs of saal trees, rubbing palms against the rugged edges of your rocks, listening to the disheartening chorus of the wailing jackals scavenging in the eye of the blue jungle, the odour of your love still lingering in the corners of my fingernails...

In the middle of the frozen nights when green serpents crawl into the warm grasses of your valley, lying on the mossy rocks shaped by the brooks, counting the jingling beats of your footsteps, I start counting the dying heart-beats of hungry porters.

On the leech-ridden paths of your dripping hillsides, away from the tiny wooden windows of your shop where you sit, poisoning the threadbare dancing workers from the sullen tunnels of Hydro-electric Project, I trudge along the flooded brook, talking to drunken drivers, listening to their tales...

Of your past lovers, of young girls who eloped with drivers to the cities, of native sons who got killed, fighting in the alien lands, of landlord's long age and his long books of scarlet accounts, of porters who hanged themselves just for a handful of boiled maize.

While reading Banira's poetry one experiences such pangs of a suffering valley. Banira always unleashes the buried

life-motion of a community, labouring for bare survival in an idyllic landscape Instead of peering into the mysterious eye of the blue valley, she conjures a vision of "sturdy legs, straining beyond strength/to carry/bear-big sackloads/beyond frozen hillranges"

To capture the agony of the Napalese masses, Banira employs the declarative outspokeness of public addresses :

From the fancy windows
of huge castles mighty giants leer
at your clownish moves
of survival in the flooded paddy fields.
When would you fling
a ball of cotton up to the weeping winds ?
When would you furl a flaming torch
in your field's wailing sky ?
When would you
flash *khukri*
in the dark night
of your labouring life to tear off
the leprosy mask
of these giants peering through
the blind
shutters of skyscrapers ?

But what saves the declarative outrageousness of public addresses from being blatant protests or mere slogans is the compassionate context of a woman's world. A Banira poem fuses the subtle inquiries of a meditation with the awed rhetoric of a prophesy

Like a dazzling prince
riding a white horse, flashing
a flame of decision,
wouldn't you come then ?
Dreamy virgins
holding pitchers of faith would welcome you.
Pregnant mothers
would donate their embryos to you.
Dusty hutdwellers
would open their tiny wooden win

facing
the green stretch of the paddy.
Even tiny tassels
would nod, beginning a dance.

Thus, the sheer vigour of her potent voice and authenticity of her vision enthralls the reader. That's what makes her poems ferocious as wild beasts, uncontrollable, candid.

Banira continuously shatters inert postures of natural objects and catapults them into sizzling images to celebrate the inherent human potential in creation :

Let us play
holi in the blood-spilling rise of the angry sun.
Let us guard
the rise of the full moon.
Let us shatter
the castle of the stars.
Let us make
wine in the turbulent pitcher of the ocean.
Let us roast
bread in the oven of the sky.
Becoming
a pair of fish, let us play
the game of life
in the warm waters of green ponds

She also transmutes the nocturnal moods of a serene landscape into vibrant little scenes to evoke the apocalypse of nuclear disaster :

Out from
blue ocean's bed, from the blankets
of emerald green forests
from the seething stretch of endless deserts
rises
a bitter storm of black rain.
In what direction, love,
is this black bulk of poison heading ?
You know that man
hobbling down the valley

with an ocean
of black clouds clutched under his armpit ?
Is he going
to blight emerald pastures
of our damp dreams ?

Banira always dapples the sheets of natural visions with bloodstains of human agony :

Pregnant
with the wails of a hundred huts
the hillranges
beyond the brook are aflame.
Can't the smell
of a burnt human hair be a reality ?

Similarly, she yokes the natural upheavals with tumults of human heart :

In the blue spaces
of your luminous skies
storms whine
to unhinge the joints of soft hillside huts
and castles huge
lit by the luxuriant lights of chandeliers
erupt volcanoes
of wrath in the hearts of lantern-lit huts.

Since Banira persistently digs life out from natural sources, even nature acquires the role of an awakened avenger in the drama of exploitation of man by man, of blue hillranges by the "cities of scorpions" where "human beings/stupified by the festering stench/of rotting pigs/drool over/running wounds":

Chasing
the monstrous trucks
loaded
with the babes of our labour
would
our brooks die ?

• • •

In the streets
of your cities ugly chaos crawls.
You have
to be a singing tree.
You have
to be a golden stream.
Otherwise,
tearing the flimsy curtains
of your soft-eyes perceptions,
a conch of war would cry.

The plot of Banira's creative imagination rolls with the changes in her heroine's role. The wavering roles of the persona, from a young girl whose sack of sari is impregnated with a pile of tulips to a working woman asking her partner to "sprinkle sparks/of sweat over ploughed fields", from a paramour whose figure is warmed by simmering volcanoes of her imaginary lover's broad chest to a rustic labour collecting "memoirs of burst sandgrains", from a young wife "afloat in the foamy atmosphere of jay-bird dreams" to a pregnant mother ready to donate her embryo to the rider of change, from a beloved caught in the frenzy of lovestorm to a mother lying in the ringing spaces of ecstasy with a new born-sun poised between her thighs, reveal the essential ingredients of Banira's vision.

To read a Banira poem, thus, is to play the constantly changing roles of the dying porters, labouring rustics, young sun-worshipping virgins, starving peasants, mothers pregnant with hope, paramours of bare fields in a suffering valley, and with dignity.

Winter '86
Nawab ka Choraha,
Jaipur

Yuyutsu R. D.

DARK HILLPATHS

1

Sweet dreams
drowse the sunny days of my youth.

In the rising sun's
service I pour a jug of brookwater

and white elephants come,
flying through flashing waterfalls,

into the blue skies of my consciousness.

A pile of tulips
pregnates the sack of my *sari*,

2

What is it
that I would discover,

tearing
the fogged screens of your mystery ?

Some city huge,
clamouring in agony ?

Some battlefields
of raging Kurukushetra ?

Some sullen
ghats of cremation ?

some ulcers
of smoky shacks crying ?

* * * *

Your streets
might be lined with

shops
of imported goods

shacks
of dying porters

processions
of enraged fists

funerals
of decaying dreams.

Your streets
might just not be bowed over

marble
steps of dazzling temples

in supplication.

On the thresholds
of stale brothels

they might
shatter their headpieces

in desperation.

3

My figure
glazed by your sparkling waterfalls

mellowed
by your drowsy ponds

I am warming before
the simmering volcanoes of your broad chest.

My face
wet and blinking has to flame

like a fiery torch
to illuminate the intricacies

of dark hillpaths.

4

In the flooded
paddy fields fogged
with folksong fluids
entangled into eachother,
green tassels, pairs
of rhododendron,
of marigold shower
kisses, exchange lives.
Lunatics from
the neighbouring hillranges
gamble on gurgling
brook's velvet banks
beside a *Rodi* house
wherein young lovers
meet to consume
the night's flaming candle.

5

Out from
blue ocean's bed, from the blankets

of emerald green forests,
from the seething stretch of endless deserts

rises
a bitter storm of black rain.

In what direction, love,
is this black bulk of poison heading ?

You know that man
hobbling down the valley

with an ocean
of black clouds clutched under his armpit ?

Is he going
to blight the emerald pastures

of our damp dreams ?

6

On each watery eye
of a peacock's iridescent feather

chanting notes
of summer ecstasy,

on each petal
of rhododendron furling ecstatic

in the straw baskets
of rustic girls in love,

I would write
plump letters of love.

Completely crazed,
caught in a frenzy of a tempest

I fling these letters
of love for you,

this post
of storm

and lightning.

7

Imagine
a scene fragrant, furled by windwings.

Imagine
a sky fogged by smoke sheets.

Imagine
a settlement gnawed by the landlords of hunger.

Imagine
some fragment of a rainbow.

Imagine
the effort of a green yak shawl

trying to wrap
and warm the body of a hillgirl.

Can't your
imagination be as fragrant

as odour
of mutton boiling in a hillside hut?

* * * *

Let us play
holi in the blood-spilling rise of the angry sun.

Let us guard
the rise of the full moon.

Let us shatter
the castle of the stars.

Let us make
wine in the turbulent pitcher of the ocean.

Let us roast
bread in the oven of the sky.

Becoming
a pair of fish, let us play

the game of life
in the warm waters of green ponds.

8

Fragment,
having discovered you,

I long
for nothing beyond, nothing.

You
and you alone

furl yourself
before the screen of my eyes.

Like a page
from my book of poems,

like a foamy
shred of monsoon,

from beginning
to end, from here to there,

stretch
the lace of your horizon.

Becoming
a pair of sturdy footsteps,

start
a life-commotion.

Be
a mountain of strength.

Clutch
a fist of energy.

Get printed
like letters of a book.

9

The tent
of our relationships stuck
in a luminous gypsy atmosphere
I am tightening. I stretch
the ropes, I thrust the nails
deep into the wet earth.
If once I loosen
you would roll down
like a hillside porter
into the deep of the green valley.
If once you get uprooted
I am not going to tighten it again.

From the high plateau
of our relationship, once you roll down
(what to talk of identity then)
even your impressions
can enter the halls of my mind
as limping lepers only.

How long would
you keep coming forward, limping ?

Across the gurgling brook
from the other end, sitting
on a slippery rock
I would watch the web
of your rickety motion,
counting the ugly stalks
of your grotesque frame.

10

In your prison cities
dragging the wagons drugged

by exhaustion
a million lives have survived

vomiting
blood brighter than your vicious sunsets.

Wouldn't you let them stretch
the tarpaulin of your tents in your colonies?

Their pus–dripping eyes
pierced by seething sandgrains burn fierce.

Wouldn't you let them
wash the dirt of their bodies

at the banks of your brooks ?

11

Don't you bare
the blood drenched sword of yours.

Don't you scrutinize the furl
of a *rainbow smiling over golden terraces.*

Don't you ask me to pour
a rain of nectar in the city of scorpions.

It's time, love,
to sing songs of fusion

as time ripens
for the seeds to burst breasts,

time to sprinkle
the sparks of sweat over ploughed fields,

time to clean
the vicious webs of missile–makers.

Don't you see how
they are rolling on the ground

tickled
by your issues of faith ?

12

Sources
of life, love,

are more fierce
than the seething rays

of Jaisalmer sunstrokes.

13

Let us collect
the memoirs of burst sandgrains

as our sturdy legs
strain beyond strength

to carry
bear-big sackloads

beyond frozen hillranges
to the local grain markets

where sharp-eyed
sleek vultures wait

in neat, whitewashed shops
for the city-trucks to come.

Dying flesh's
desperate drama....

Chasing
the monstrous trucks

loaded
with the babes of our labour

would
our brooks die ?

Buried beneath
the festering load

of hunger
let us go back, crossing

the turbulent brooks,
to chant mantras

of the swollen
footsteps thumping

the squelching hillpaths.

14

What deafening uproar
shakes the tattered curtains of our shack ?

Is it from your cities
where human beings stupified

by the festering stench
of rotting pigs

drool over
running wounds ?

And what is that
that glares behind the gleaming glassed counters?

Isn't it the ugly face
of a bat turned upside down

in the flooded symphony
of neon lights ? crying

CASH DOWN !
CREDIT POISONS !

JUNGLE FIRE

15

The sweaty smell
of our bodies thrust us deep

into the pond of stupor.
Your each new stroke

answered
the awed questions of the thunder stricken night.

And I was afloat
in the foamy atmosphere of jay-bird dreams.

Our velvet quilt
like the night's translucent wing covered us

as we lay upon eachother,
concentrated, gazing

like the fond shadows
of Mashapushre hilltops shimmering

in the watery eyes of Lake Fewa.

Deep
in the slippery tunnel of the night

your each stroke
kept shaking illusions, adding

magnificance to the landscape
below the drowsy hillocks.

Deep
in the cool well of the night

I filled
the valley of my palms with moonlight

and
massaged your tender limbs.

16

In the streets
of your cities ugly chaos crawls.

You have
to be a singing tree.

You have
to be a golden stream.

Otherwise,
tearing the flimsy curtains

of your soft–eyes perceptions,
a conch of war would cry.

17

You have to be
a yagya of peace and prosperity,

a narrator
of tumultuous revolutions.

Your sweat showers
will shape the lines of your fate.

On your bright forehead
will I write the headlines of history.

From your shoulders
will the moons and suns of future rise.

18

Pregnant
with the wails of a hundred huts

the hillranges
beyond the brook are aflame.

Can't the smell
of a burnt human hair be a reality ?

19

Drunken feet
dance to the rhythm of maize grains

bursting
in the seething cauldrons.

In the light
of the crackling hearth

grandma's tale
makes kids clutch

their fingers
between their jewel-teeth.

In the eye
of greenery the night consumes

pitchers of local wine,
softening fogged hilltops.

The singing virgins
accept the rhetoric of the sturdy youth.

Wouldn't you
call it bliss, prosperity ?

20

From the fancy windows
of huge castles mighty giants leer

at your clownish moves
of survival in the flooded paddy fields.

When would you fling
a ball of cotton up to the weeping winds ?

When would you furl a flaming tortch
in your field's wailing sky ?

When would you
flash *khukri*

in the dark night
of your labouring life to tear off

the leprosy mask
of these gaints peering through

the blind
shutters of skyscrapers.

21

In the blue spaces
of your luminous skies

storms whine
to unhinge the joints of soft hillside huts

and castles huge
lit by the luxuriant lights of chandeliers

erupt volcanoes
of wrath in the hearts of lantern-lit huts.

22

In this part of the world, love,
human beings have risen

to clutch sparks of life,

to shake the tongues of huge brass bells
hanging in your damp squares,

to challenge
the order of your yearly moves.

Just to glimpse
the hissing brooks of motion

have human beings
burnt their promiscious dreams

with the flames
of being born on this earth,

branded
the moons of their babe's rosy palms,

bursted
the soft balloons of their wives' breasts.

Just for a spark of life.

*   *   *   *

Wouldn't you come then to see
how I too have torn the tent of my skin apart.

The golden dust
from the shrine of your footprints

I would pick up.

Besmearing
my body with your golden dust

I would become
your eternal bride.

A heifer
about to be hacked

to bless
a congress of corpses,

that's what I am.

Won't you accept me ?

23

Like a dazzling prince
riding a white horse, flashing

a flame of decision,
wouldn't *you come then ?*

Dreamy virgins
holding pitchers of faith would welcome you.

Pregnant mothers
would donate their embryos to you.

Dusty hutdwellers
would open their tiny wooden windows

facing
the green stretch of the paddy.

Even tiny tassels
would nod, beginning a dance.

24

Rider,
wouldn't you come to burst

the pond
of blood thickened in my chilled fissure.

If only you could
smash its glossy surface

flanked
by the goddesses of poverty and prosperity

I would appear
on the gateway to serve you

with the pitcher of my body.

Would you call
it a futile wish ?

Isn't it
loyality to life

fuelled
by the fires of life ?

25

Concentrating thus,
reaching a liquid point of your manhood,

let us not try
to conceive a point of history

in the form of a colourful stream.
(History though *is* a colourful stream)

Let not
the seething sources of longing

suck the necklace
of this colaurful stream flung

into the vast stretch,
of our mind's desert.

Let it crawl endlessly,
Sagarmatha, Khaiber,

Kakeshwar, Suej, Panama.
History never believes in suicide.

Its boundaries
are its own, and in its glass houses

it treasures
the corpses of murders and suicides.

History never commits suicide.
It always conjures a trial box in itself for us all.

26

Comfort
of melting, romance of meeting,

lust of getting sloshed out,
passion of getting knocked down

the bliss of fusing
like brooks intermittently.

Perhaps
Himal knows all.

Glacial slolidarity
before melting,

quietitude
after upsurge of ecstasy,

clear comedowns,
after ardent climbs, inertia

after motion, silence
after frivolity.

Perhaps
Himal, a penitent, a lunatic knows all.

27

Let your figure
be a shrine of sturdy porters.

Let your each sense
be a well for parched throats

Let your each limb
be a relic for figures

demented
by the fields' callous moves.

In your broad chest
I would stick an almond tree.

Let it flourish
and breathe fragrant.

28

Relieved
after the labour of giving you birth,

I lie, whirling
in the ringing spaces of ecstasy.

Won't you
pour in profusion, sweet sky,

to coronate
the birth of this newborn sun ?

Is this moment
going to remain uncelebrated, mundane ?

Like an alert infantry
behind the dark hills millions of sunrays

are waiting
to climb over to view this end.

29

Nurse, where are you ? where ?

Crying anarchic
stained with my fresh blood

the just born sun
lies between my sticky thighs.

Would no nurse
glaze your body bright ?

Has she
gone to the toilet ?

Or is it
to your supermarkets that she has gone ?

Would I die
with the placenta poisioning fast in my womb ?

And your umblical cord ?

Sweet my sun,
are you going to be orphaned, derelict ?

30

Sweet son,
you could be a Hamlet,

a dangling
diadem of dying and being

of cause
and confusion,

could be
a sword of decision,

could sharpen your
new blade on the rocks of my body,

could dip its emblazoned point
in a bowl of potassium cyanide

to pierce my soft
throat with its poisoned end.

Squirming
in the point of poison

I would love to die

for secretly
I have been rearing

an illicit affair with my age,
an illicit affair with my age.

31

Man's child sleeps
in the cradle I rock.

My lap's warmth
glows the colour of his dreams.

On the day
of his birth, won't you

give him
your strong shoulder ?

Aren't you going
to present him a galloping white horse ?

In the glow
of moonlight, won't you dazzle

his life's flame ?

Son of a man he is,
what more would you want ?

Let him
climb your shoulders.

Let him rise
to view the worries of the world.

Make him
a mighty rider.

Play
pipes of welcome.

His beginning
of this journey is promise of our life.

31

Man's child sleeps
in the cradle I rock.

My lap's warmth
glows the colour of hi

On the day
of his birth, won't yo

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, In The Halls Of Hell

..ʊ R. D. & Ramanand Rathi

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'The feeling for the downtrodden comes alive in every second page.'

Keki N. Daruwala in *The Hindustan Times*

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The book establishes R. D. as an important voice in the world of Indian English poetry. The poems are those experiences of life which R. D. ardently lived and exuberantly wrote.

'Young, versatile, energetic, he is rocking and rolling with new imperssions.'
—*David Ray*

'On first reading the poems touch with their sheer honesty.'
—*Jayanta Mahapatra*

Yuyutsu has a good eye and a good ear :

The rain stopped in the jungle
The cicada stopped its chirr.

To have an ear for a sudden silence is unique.

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'Yuyustu is a very promising poet with a fine sense of place and gift for vivid imagery.'
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Jayanta Mahapatra

Edited by Yuyutsu R. D. & Ramanand Rathi

The book contains stunning metaphors of contemporary chaos caused by the vultures of the country's corrupt leaders. Mahapatra unleashes the buried horror of long and supreme knives in Punjab and the barbarous dance of bejewelled snakes, of multinational companies in Bhopal The poems are bitter experiences of the Indian masses betrayed by an inhuman set-up.

"Between waking and sleep, sunlight and rain, love and loss, Jayanata Mahapatra probes his own dark heart for the happiness he fails to find anywhere else."
—*Hudson Review*

"Mahapatra's passion and insight, his capture of hurt in seeking justification for life through greater perception is indeed, in its own keen way crying 'More light ! More light !' The man is at once tender and unflinching."
—Ronald H. Bayes in *The Pilot*.

"...the touchstone for them (the poems) is always the value of the lives of men, women and children, caught briefly.in the world of pain and poverty."
—John Barnie in *Kunapipi*.

'Laconic beginnings lead to abrupt, frightening endings.'
Keki N. Daruwalla in *The Hindustan Times*

"In *Dispossessed Nests* one hears the wails of a world shattered within a human heart."
-Yuyutsu R.D. and Ramanand Rathi (*From the Introduction*)



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दूज का चाँद

मेरे छोटे घर-कुटीर का दिया
तुम्हारे मन्दिर के विस्तृत आँगन में
सहमा-सा रख दिया गया ।



असाध्य वीणा

असाध्य वीणा

आ गये प्रियंवद ! केशकम्बली ! गुफा-गेह !
राजा ने आसन दिया । कहा :
"कृतकृत्य हुआ मैं तात ! पधारे आप ।
भरोसा है अब मुझ को
साध आज मेरे जीवन की पूरी होगी ।"

लघु संकेत समझ राजा का
गण दौड़े । लाये असाध्य वीणा,
साधक के आगे रख उस को, हट गये ।
सभा की उत्सुक आँखें
एक बार वीणा को लख, टिक गयीं
प्रियंवद के चेहरे पर ।

"यह वीणा उत्तराखण्ड के गिरि-प्रान्तर से
—घने वनों में जहाँ तपस्या करते हैं व्रतचारी—
बहुत समय पहले आयी थी ।
पूरा तो इतिहास न जान सके हम :
किन्तु सुना है
वज्रकीर्ति ने मन्त्रपूत जिस
अति प्राचीन किरीटी-तरु से इसे गढ़ा था—
उस के कानों में हिम-शिखर रहस्य कहा करते थे अपने,

कन्धों पर बादल सोते थे,
उस की करि शुण्डों-सी डालें
हिम-वर्षा से पूरे वन-यूथों का कर लेती थीं परित्राण,
कोटर में भालू बसते थे,
केहरि उस के वल्कल से कन्धे खुजलाने आते थे।
और—सुना है—जड़ उस की जा पहुँची थी पाताल-लोक,
उस की गन्ध-प्रवण शीतलता से फण टिका नाग वासुकि
सोता था।

उसी किरीटी-तरु से वज्रकीर्ति ने
सारा जीवन इसे गढ़ा :
हठ-साधना यही थी उस साधक की—
वीणा पूरी हुई, साथ साधना, साथ ही जीवन-लीला।"

राजा रुके, साँस लम्बी ले कर फिर बोले :
"मेरे हार गये सब जाने-माने कलावन्त,
सब की विद्या हो गयी अकारथ, दर्प चूर,
कोई ज्ञानी गुणी आज तक इसे न साध सका।
अब यह असाध्य वीणा ही ख्यात हो गयी।
पर मेरा अब भी है विश्वास
कृच्छ्र-तप वज्रकीर्ति का व्यर्थ नहीं था।
वीणा बोलेगी अवश्य, पर तभी
इसे जब सच्चा-स्वरसिद्ध गोद में लेगा।
तात ! प्रियंवद ! लो, यह सम्मुख रही तुम्हारे
वज्रकीर्ति की वीणा,
यह मैं, यह रानी, भरी सभा यह :
सब उदग्र, पर्युत्सुक,
जन-मात्र प्रतीक्षमाण !"

आँगन के पार द्वार

केशकम्बली गुफा-गेह ने खोला कम्बल।
धरती पर चुप-चाप बिछाया।
वीणा उस पर रख, पलक मूँद कर, प्राण खींच,
कर के प्रणाम,
अस्पर्श छुअन से छुए तार।
धीरे बोला : "राजन्! पर मैं तो
कलावन्त हूँ नहीं, शिष्य, साधक हूँ—
जीवन के अनकहे सत्य का साक्षी।
वज्रकीर्ति!
प्राचीन किरीटी-तरु!
अभिमन्त्रित वीणा!
ध्यान-मात्र इन का तो गद्गद विह्वल कर देने वाला है।"

चुप हो गया प्रियंवद।
सभा भी मौन हो रही।

वाद्य उठा साधक ने गोद रख लिया।
धीरे-धीरे झुक उस पर, तारों पर मस्तक टेक दिया।
सभा चकित थी—अरे, प्रियंवद क्या सोता है?
केशकम्बली अथवा हो कर पराभूत
झुक गया वाद्य पर?
वीणा सचमुच क्या है असाध्य?

पर उस स्पन्दित सन्नाटे में
मौन प्रियंवद साध रहा था वीणा—
नहीं, स्वयं अपने को शोध रहा था।
सघन निविड में वह अपने को

सौंप रहा था उसी किरीटी-तरु को।
कौन प्रियंवद है कि दम्भ कर
इस अभिमन्त्रित कारुवाद्य के सम्मुख आवे ?
कौन बजावे
यह वीणा जो स्वयं एक जीवन-भर की साधना रही ?
भूल गया था केशकम्बली राज-सभा को :
कम्बल पर अभिमन्त्रित एक अकेलेपन में डूब गया था
जिस में साक्षी के आगे था
जीवित वही किरीटी-तरु
जिस की जड़ वासुकि के फण पर थी आधारित,
जिसके कन्धों पर बादल सोते थे
और कान में जिस के हिमगिरि कहते थे अपने रहस्य।
सम्बोधित कर उस तरु को, करता था
नीरव एकालाप प्रियंवद।

"ओ विशाल तरु !
शत-सहस्र पल्लवन-पतझरों ने जिसका नित रूप सँवारा,
कितनी बरसातों कितने खद्योतों ने आरती उतारी,
दिन भौंरे कर गये गुंजरित,
रातों में झिल्ली ने
अनथक मंगल-गान सुनाये,
साँझ-सवेरे अनगिन
अनचीन्हे खग-कुल की मोद-भरी क्रीडा-काकलि
डाली-डाली को कँपा गयी—
ओ दीर्घकाय !
ओ पूरे झारखण्ड के अग्रज,
तात, सखा, गुरु, आश्रय,

आँगन के पार

आता महच्छाय,
ओ व्याकुल मुखरित वन-ध्वनियों के
वृन्दगान के मूर्त्त रूप,
मैं तुझे सुनूँ,
देखूँ, ध्याऊँ
अनिमेष, स्तब्ध, संयत, संयुत, निर्वाक् :
कहाँ साहस पाऊँ
छू सकूँ तुझे!
तेरी काया को छेद, बाँध कर रची गयी वीणा को
किस स्पर्द्धा से
हाथ करें आघात
छीनने को तारों से
एक चोट में वह संचित संगीत जिसे रचने में
स्वयं न जाने कितनों के स्पन्दित प्राण रच गये!

"नहीं, नहीं! वीणा यह मेरी गोद रखी है, रहे,
किन्तु मैं ही तो
तेरी गोदी बैठा मोद-भरा बालक हूँ,
ओ तरु-तात! सँभाल मुझे,
मेरी हर किलक
पुलक में डूब जाय :
मैं सुनूँ,
गुनूँ,
विस्मय से भर आँकूँ
तेरे अनुभव का एक-एक अन्तःस्वर
तेरे दोलन की लोरी पर झूमूँ मैं तन्मय—
गा तू :

तेरी लय पर मेरी साँसें
भरें, पुरें, रीतें, विश्रान्ति पायें।

"गा तू!
यह वीणा रक्खी है : तेरा अंग—अपंग।
किन्तु अंगी, तू अक्षत, आत्म-भरित,
रस-विद्,
तू गा :
मेरे अँधियारे अन्तस् में आलोक जगा
स्मृति का
श्रुति का—
तू गा, तू गा, तू गा, तू गा!

"हाँ, मुझे स्मरण है :
बदली—कौंध—पत्तियों पर वर्षा-बूँदों की पटपट।
घनी रात में महुए का चुप-चाप टपकना।
चौंके खग-शावक की चिहुँक।
शिलाओं को दुलराते वन-झरने के
द्रुत लहरीले जल का कल-निनाद।
कुहरे में छन कर आती
पर्वती गाँव के उत्सव-ढोलक की थाप।
गडरिये की अनमनी बाँसुरी।
कठफोड़े का ठेका। फुलसुँघनी की आतुर फुरकन।
ओस-बूँद की ढरकन—इतनी कोमल, तरल, कि झरते-
झरते मानो
हरसिंगार का फूल बन गयी।
भरे शरद के ताल, लहरियों की सरसर-ध्वनि।

आँगन के पार द्वार

कूँजों का क्रेंकार। कौंद लम्बी टिट्टिभ की।
पंख-युक्त सायक-सी हंस-बलाका।
चीड़-वनों में गन्ध-अन्ध उन्मद पतंग की जहाँ-तहाँ टकराहट
जल-प्रपात का प्लुत एकस्वर।
झिल्ली-दादुर, कोकिल-चातक की झंकार-पुकारों की यति में
संसृति की साँय-साँय।

"हाँ, मुझे स्मरण है :
दूर पहाड़ों से काले मेघों की बाढ़
हाथियों का मानो चिंघाड़ रहा हो यूथ।
घरघराहट चढ़ती बहिया की।
रेतीले कगार का गिरना छप्-छड़ाप।
झंझा की फुफकार, तप्त,
पेड़ों का अररा कर टूट-टूट कर गिरना।
ओले की कर्री चपत।
जमे पाले से तनी कटारी-सी सूखी घासों की टूटन।
ऐंठी मिट्टी का स्निग्ध घाम में धीरे-धीरे रिसना।
हिम-तुषार के फाहे धरती के घावों को सहलाते चुप-चाप।
घाटियों में भरती
गिरती चट्टानों की गूँज—
काँपती मन्द्र गूँज—अनुगूँज—साँस खोयी-सी,
धीरे-धीरे नीरव।

"मुझे स्मरण है
हरी तलहटी में, छोटे पेड़ों की ओट, ताल पर
बँधे समय वन-पशुओं की नानाविध आतुर-तृप्त पुकारें :
गर्जन, घुर्घुर, चीख़, भूँक, हुक्का, चिचियाहट।

कमल-कुमुद-पत्रों पर चोर-पैर द्रुत धावित
जल-पंछी की चाप।
थाप दादुर की चकित छलाँगों की।
पन्थी के घोड़े की टाप अधीर।
अचंचल धीर थाप भैंसों के भारी खुर की।

"मुझे स्मरण है
उझक क्षितिज से
किरण भोर की पहली
जब तकती है ओस-बूँद को—
उस क्षण की सहसा चौंकी-सी सिहरन।
और दुपहरी में जब
घास-फूल अनदेखे खिल जाते हैं
मौमाखियाँ असंख्य झूमती करती हैं गुंजार—
उस लम्बे विलमे क्षण का तन्द्रालस ठहराव।
और साँझ को
जब तारों की तरल कँपकँपी
स्पर्शहीन झरती है—
मानो नभ में तरल-नयन ठिठकी
निःसंख्य सवत्सा युवती माताओं के आशीर्वाद—
उस सन्धि-निमिष की पुलकन लीयमान।

"मुझे स्मरण है
और चित्र प्रत्येक
स्तब्ध, विजड़ित करता है मुझ को।
सुनता हूँ मैं
पर हर स्वर-कम्पन लेता है मुझ को मुझ से सोख—

वायु-सा नाद-भरा मैं उड़ जाता हूँ।...
मुझे स्मरण है—
पर मुझ को मैं भूल गया हूँ :
सुनता हूँ मैं—
पर मैं मुझ से परे, शब्द में लीयमान।

"मैं नहीं, नहीं! मैं कहीं नहीं!
ओ रे तरु! ओ वन!
ओ स्वर-सँभार!
नाद-मय संसृति!
ओ रस-प्लावन!
मुझे क्षमा कर—भूल अकिंचनता को मेरी—
मुझे ओट दे—ढँक ले—छा ले—
ओ शरण्य!
मेरे गूँगेपन को तेरे सोये स्वर-सागर का ज्वार डुबा ले!
आ, मुझे भुला,
तू उतर बीन के तारों में
अपने से गा
अपने को गा—
अपने खग-कुल को मुखरित कर
अपनी छाया में पले मृगों की चौकड़ियों को ताल बाँध,
अपने छायातप, वृष्टि-पवन, पल्लव-कुसुमन की लय पर
अपने जीवन-संचय को कर छन्दयुक्त,
अपनी प्रज्ञा को वाणी दे!
तू गा, तू गा—
तू सन्निधि पा—तू खो
तू आ—तू हो—तू गा! तू गा!"

राजा जागे ।
समाधिस्थ संगीतकार का हाथ उठा था—
काँपी थी उँगलियाँ ।
अलस अँगड़ाई ले कर मानो जाग उठी थी वीणा :
किलक उठे थे स्वर-शिशु ।
नीरव पद रखता जालिक मायावी
सधे करों से धीरे धीरे धीरे
डाल रहा था जाल हेम-तारों का ।

सहसा वीणा झनझना उठी—
संगीतकार की आँखों में ठंडी पिघली ज्वाला-सी झलक गयी—
रोमांच एक बिजली-सा सब के तन में दौड़ गया ।
अवतरित हुआ संगीत
स्वयम्भू
जिस में सोता है अखण्ड
ब्रह्मा का मौन
अशेष प्रभामय ।

डूब गये सब एक साथ ।
सब अलग-अलग एकाकी पार तिरे ।

राजा ने अलग सुना :
जय देवी यशःकाय
वरमाल लिये
गाती थी मंगल-गीत,
दुन्दुभी दूर कहीं बजती थी,

आँगन के पार द्वार

राज-मुकुट सहसा हल्का हो आया था, मानो हो फूल
सिरिस का।
ईर्ष्या, महदाकांक्षा, द्वेष, चाटुता
सभी पुराने लुगड़े-से झर गये, निखर आया था जीवन-कांचन
धर्म-भाव से जिसे निछावर वह कर देगा।

रानी ने अलग सुना :
छँटती बदली में एक कौंध कह गयी—
तुम्हारे ये मणि-माणिक, कंठहार, पट-वस्त्र,
मेखला-किंकिणि—
सब अन्धकार के कण हैं ये! आलोक एक है
प्यार अनन्य! उसी की
विद्युल्लता घेरती रहती है रस-भार मेघ को,
थिरक उसी की छाती पर, उस में छिप कर सो जाती है
आश्वस्त, सहज विश्वास-भरी।
रानी
उस एक प्यार को साधेगी।

सब ने भी अलग-अलग संगीत सुना।
इस को
वह कृपा-वाक्य था प्रभुओं का—
उस को
आतंक-मुक्ति का आश्वासन :
इस को
वह भरी तिजोरी में सोने की खनक—
उसे
बटुली में बहुत दिनों के बाद अन्न की सोंधी खुदबुद।

किसी एक को नयी वधू की सहमी-सी पायल-ध्वनि ।
किसी दूसरे को शिशु की किलकारी ।
एक किसी को जाल-फँसी मछली की तड़पन—
एक अपर को चहक मुक्त नभ में उड़ती चिड़िया की ।
एक तीसरे को मंडी की ठेलमठेल, गाहकों की आस्पर्द्धा-भरी
बोलियाँ,

चौथे को मन्दिर की ताल-युक्त घंटा-ध्वनि ।
और पाँचवें को लोहे पर सधे हथौड़े की सम चोटें
और छठे को लंगर पर कसमसा रही नौका पर लहरों की
अविराम थपक ।

बटिया पर चमरौधे की रुँधी चाप सातवें के लिए—
और आठवें को कुलिया की कटी मेंड़ से बहते जल की
छुल-छुल ।

इसे गमक नट्टिन की एड़ी के घुँघरूँ की—
उसे युद्ध का ढोल :
इसे संझा-गोधूली की लघु टुन-टुन—
उसे प्रलय का डमरु-नाद ।
इसको जीवन की पहली अँगड़ाई
पर उस को महाजृम्भ विकराल काल !
सब डूबे, तिरे, झिपे, जागे—
हो रहे वशंवद, स्तब्ध :
इयत्ता सब की अलग-अलग जागी,
संघीत हुई,
पा गयी विलय ।

वीणा फिर मूक हो गयी ।

"साधु ! साधु !"
आँगन के पार द्वार

राजा सिंहासन से उतरे—
रानी ने अर्पित की सतलड़ी माल,
जनता विह्वल कह उठी "धन्य !
हे स्वरजित् ! धन्य ! धन्य !"

संगीतकार
वीणा को धीरे से नीचे रख, ढँक—मानो
गोदी में सोये शिशु को पालने डाल कर मुग्धा माँ
हट जाय, दीठ से दुलराती—
उठ खड़ा हुआ।
बढ़ते राजा का हाथ उठा करता आवर्जन,
बोला :
"श्रेय नहीं कुछ मेरा :
मैं तो डूब गया था स्वयं शून्य में—
वीणा के माध्यम से अपने को मैंने
सब-कुछ को सौंप दिया था—
सुना आपने जो वह मेरा नहीं,
न वीणा का था :
वह तो सब-कुछ की तथता थी—
महाशून्य
वह महामौन
अविभाज्य, अनाप्त, अद्रवित, अप्रमेय
जो शब्दहीन
सब में गाता है।"

नमस्कार कर मुड़ा प्रियंवद केशकम्बली। ले कर कम्बल
गेह-गुफा को चला गया।

उठ गयी सभा । सब अपने-अपने काम लगे ।
युग पलट गया ।

प्रिय पाठक ! यों मेरी वाणी भी
मौन हुई ।



प्रथम पंक्तियों की सूची